

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Rebecca Kapule, 73, retired hotel clerk

*"Weekends, we women folks used to go out (to) catch seaweeds and one of the women would be home cooking lunch. So we all come back with whatever we catch out there and sit under the hau tree or big tree and we start cleaning (the) seaweed. When lunch period comes along, we have our lunch. At the meantime, everybody's picking or revealing old stories."*

Rebecca (Akiona) Kapule, Hawaiian-Chinese-Caucasian, was born June 10, 1913 in Honolulu. Her parents were Ah Fong Akiona, a shipfitter at Pearl Harbor, and Julia Pila Akiona.

Kapule spent her youth in Pālolo, O'ahu, and attended Pālolo Elementary, Washington Intermediate, St. Andrew's Priory, and Phillips Commercial School.

In 1932, she worked as a clerk for Kress downtown. She married Major Kapule, a longtime Waikīkī resident in 1934, and has lived in various sections of Waikīkī ever since.

In 1950, Kapule began working as a clerk at Moana Hotel, first working for the front desk, then transferring to the reservations section. She retired in 1976.

Tape No. 13-23-1-85 and 13-24-1-85

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rebecca Kapule (RK)

March 19, 1985

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Rebecca Kapule at her home at Waikīkī, O'ahu on March 19, 1985. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Can you tell me, Mrs. Kapule, when you were born and where you were born?

RK: Well, I was born in Pālolo Valley, June 10, 1913.

WN: What street in Pālolo?

RK: Tenth Avenue.

WN: What was your father's name and what kind of job did he do?

RK: My father's name was Ah Fong Akiona. He worked as a shipfitter at Pearl Harbor.

WN: What is a shipfitter?

RK: Well, I think he was more like a carpenter. But he comes under that title of "shipfitter" at Pearl Harbor.

WN: And what was your mother's name? What did she do?

RK: My mother was Julia La'ie Pila. That's her maiden name at the time. She was a regular housewife.

WN: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

RK: Seven boys and two girls.

WN: Living in Pālolo, you told me once, you used to come to Waikīkī. What kinds of things did you do in Waikīkī?

RK: Well, after being there until my sixth grade we moved out of Pālolo down to the lower Tenth [Avenue] of Kaimukī. Then from there, I went down to Waikīkī to swim. That was our recreation at the time,

played volleyball down at the beach.

WN: What beach?

RK: Public Bath, Sans Souci, Natatorium, Moana Hotel, Royal Hawaiian. Wherever we gonna go to swim. Then we go back home.

At the meantime, we go through the park. Kapi'olani Park was not like now. Had a few animals. Had Daisy there. There were monkeys, (bears, birds, etc.). But lot of coconut trees and date trees. Then they have little, what would you call, inlet-outlet (waterway).

WN: People talk about Daisy. Who was Daisy?

RK: Daisy was an elephant.

But they had that little zoo there that we go through Kapi'olani Park. But now it's larger, has increased.

WN: What else was in Kapi'olani Park, at that time, when you were young?

RK: Well, they have the pine. The big ironwood trees. They had the old bandstand. Kapi'olani Park, they used to have polo (games and horse racing) there when we go out on Sundays to watch.

WN: How did you get from your house to Waikīkī?

RK: Just walk.

WN: What route did you take?

RK: Well, I'd come down Wela Street and all the way down to Waikīkī.

WN: You said that you used to go Royal Hawaiian [Hotel]? By the beach?

RK: Uh huh [yes].

WN: Before it was built? You remember that?

RK: Moana Hotel was there. Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] wasn't built until 1927.

Kūhiō Beach was the beach home for the royalty [Prince Kūhiō's home]. Part of the beach, we couldn't walk on. We'd have to come on the (road) 'cause it was fenced off. Just Diamond Head side of Moana Hotel.

I used to wonder, "Why the barbed wire fence was over the beach?"

My parents would say, "No. You can't go through there. It's private." But I couldn't figure that out. If you wanted to go around to the other side, you'd have to come out on the highway. Later on in

years, I knew that was the royalty beach home.

WN: You mean "the highway," you mean Kalākaua Avenue?

RK: Yes. That was Kalākaua Avenue. But it was just a dirt road then, no sidewalk.

WN: What did the house look like? The royalty?

RK: It was a wooden structure house. Looks like it was red. That's about all that I could remember because of that private beach that we couldn't go through.

My father and mother was very stern about us going through the barbed wire. And kids can be kids, you know. You want to go and see what's on the other side of that barbed wire fence. So we'd get couple slaps from that, from not listening to them. But eventually, I found out, it was the royalty place.

WN: Did you ever see people on the beach?

RK: No. I never did because my parents always say, "Keep away."

WN: How far out did the fence extend?

RK: Right to the water line. The barbed wire goes across that beach into the water.

WN: So actually, if you wanted to you could swim . . .

RK: Yeah. We could go swim around there but we couldn't go in. That was taboo. People don't go in there.

WN: So in those days, there was a beachwalk where you could walk . . .

RK: No. It's the beach.

WN: On the sand then?

RK: Yeah. The sand.

WN: Exactly from where to where do you remember it being closed off? Was it Kūhiō Beach?

RK: Kūhiō Beach. Then Kūhiō Beach and Public Baths. Then the Steiner's and Hustace's homes. Then the Moana [Hotel]. So Kūhiō Beach was the part that I remember [being closed to the public].

WN: What about the Steiner's and Hustace's area? Could you walk along the beach by their houses, too?

RK: Chee, I really---well, I cannot tell you if I did. 'Cause I know that I'd come over on the street side and go (to) Moana Hotel. Then



there's a wall there before Moana Hotel.

But I don't know if the Steiner's home were built later on in years. That's way back in '29 and the '30s. I don't know if their home was there at the time.

From Kaimukī, (we came) down to swim and picnic. We go camping, (too).

WN: Where did you camp?

RK: Well, we go all around the island for camping. Diamond Head Lighthouse. We go camping there. We were young, little kids. We go on the beach in Waikīkī if my father going out torching. 'Cause he loves to fish, so we go out camping on the weekend from Friday to Sunday.

WN: What kind fish did he catch?

RK: Oh, he catch all kinds. Then he brings them in. He has a signal by whistling to my mother and she starts the fire even if it's two o'clock and three o'clock in the morning. He comes in. Then they clean (and cook the) fish and then we eat.

We kids like to just take a blanket and lay on the beach. Then we'll get up and we'll eat again--fresh fish (breakfast, etc.). But we had different people that camped on the beach--Japanese folks. . . . Then we trade food or call them to eat something. Anybody that walks the beach, whatever they are, Japanese or [whoever is] camping. Japanese do the same thing. They'll bring some little thing over and (we) give them something what (we) have.

WN: You told me too that by Makee Island side, Kapi'olani Park side you used to get coconuts?

RK: Yeah, there was a whole lot of coconut trees in there. Waikīkī had a lot of coconut trees. So whenever you want coconuts you go and pick up coconuts and take them home. We used a lot of coconut then at the time. And lot of date trees.

WN: How about on the other side of the street of Kalākaua? What do you remember about that area? Were there stores or things like that?

RK: Oh, yeah, they have stores. But way back they didn't have stores at the time. Was more cottages-like across Moana Hotel, they had the big open space there. Then they had cottages in there that they rent out to visitors that come in.

WN: What's there now?

RK: That's Princess Ka'iulani [Hotel]. Then across the street towards Diamond Head, they had shrubs in there like we had seen in the pictures. Was a big home in there. I forgot who's the people that lived there before. Later on in years there were stores. That's

where the Hyatt [Regency Hotel] is now. That's on Ka'iulani Avenue (and Kalākaua).

Then further on towards Diamond Head, well, they didn't have that many stores in there.

(Visitors arrive. Taping stops, then resumes.)

RK: They had a big village across the street from Kūhiō Beach, close to Kapahulu Avenue. They had this . . . .

WN: This is Paoakalani area . . . .

RK: They had a big village there. Big family.

WN: Lalani Hawaiian Village?

RK: Uh huh [yes].

WN: The Mossman family?

RK: Yeah. That's right. Big village there, Lalani Village.

WN: What was it like?

RK: Well, they had a lot of entertainment (and luaus) there for visitors.

WN: Did you ever go there?

RK: Oh, yes. I used to go there when I was young. 'Cause they had lot of entertainment there, like any other big thing. That was really made up of coconut leaves and---more Hawaiian atmosphere. A big open space because their property was there. It was run by this Mossman family.

WN: Did you have to pay to get in?

RK: You have to. They started from a little thing and then it got bigger and bigger. They had luaus up there and a big show. The girls all danced for their parents.

But there were coconut trees, date trees right up in that section there. Where you have to come down the road was only a road for two cars. That's about all. Kiawe trees.

WN: Along Kalākaua Avenue, was there the trolley at that time? Trolley tracks?

RK: I would say, streetcar at the time (and trolley later). That's (to) Kapi'olani Park out there.

WN: End of Kapi'olani Park?

RK: Yes. The end of Kapi'olani Park. They make the turn there and come all the way back.

WN: Diamond Head Road.

RK: That's the end of Kapi'olani Park. The streetcar. Goes all the way down Kalākaua and over McCully, out to Beretania then through town and King Street.

WN: In the '20s, the Ala Wai Canal was built. What do you remember about that? The canal? [Dredging of the Ala Wai Canal began in 1921, and was completed in 1928.]

RK: Well, before that was just the bank wall. Not built. But I didn't know too much of the building of the canal because I didn't come on this end at the time. But before that was nothing but bank.

WN: You mean, just dirt?

RK: Just dirt. Like how we had seen in that picture of the fisherman on the little stilt, fishing. You can tell there were only bank.

WN: So no concrete wall?

RK: No concrete wall. The building of the concrete wall, I didn't take notice then. If the wall was built in [the] 1920s, I was going the other way, Public Bath most of the time. I didn't come on this side yet.

But I knew there was a canal. Sometime we come as far as McCully [Street] 'cause there was nothing but brushes (rice fields and duck ponds). We'd come down (on) the streetcar.

WN: Tell me something about your education.

RK: Well, I started with just the two-room building in Pālolo School. I had a principal and one teacher. Each year they add another room and another grade. One teacher and our principal taught two classes. The teacher would have two different grades in her class.

I left there when I was in the sixth grade. I went to Washington Junior High [i.e., Washington Intermediate]. I stayed there one year. And then was transferred to Kaimukī at Lili'uokalani [School]. I had to go back to my district.

WN: How come you had to go Washington for one year?

RK: That was the first junior high in the whole island. So the children from all the different districts would come that year, if they were going into the seventh grade, (at) the Washington Junior High, on King Street. That's how you get to know all different children from the different district.

Then the next year, they turned Lili'uokalani into a junior high. I had to go back there. I stayed there that one year. Then my mother put me in a boarding school. (Laughs)

WN: How come?

RK: (Laughs) I guess she wanted me to go to a boarding school. I had lost my father already. There was only my mother home and whatever children were home. Most of the boys, older boys, were out to sea.

WN: Doing what?

RK: Merchant marine (and navy). Then I went to [St. Andrews] Priory as a boarder. I stayed there a year and I didn't like it. I packed everything and went home.

(Laughter)

RK: I went back to Lili'uokalani [School]. I finished junior high. Then I went to Phillips Commercial.

WN: Phillips Commercial [School]?

RK: Uh huh [yes]. But I did not complete there 'cause I was sick.

WN: Where was that?

RK: It was about, you know where the [Honolulu] Academy of Arts? Right above, it's Victoria Street [and Green Street]. Was a big home there. It's not a big school. It was a private, commercial school 'cause they didn't have too many commercial school, but she was the best at the time.

WN: "She" meaning who?

RK: Mrs. Phillips. She didn't have too big a class there. Eventually, the commercial school began to develop later on in years [and] they (added) buildings. It was a big home that she convert into a commercial school. (I had) to take shorthand and typing, accounting and all of that.

I didn't stay there too long (about a year and a half). I learned quite a bit from there, but I came down with a sick[ness]. I didn't go back and I didn't want to be back of my class 'cause I was off for about a month (or so).

WN: So you quit and what did you do from that point?

RK: That's when I went to work as a salesclerk. No, not as a salesclerk; as a fountain girl. That's my first job. Fountain girl at Kress.

WN: Downtown?

RK: Yeah. I left there after a year 'cause I got sick.

WN: How did you like that job?

RK: Oh, it was all right. (My) first job, (I had) to learn a lot and (made) a lot of mistakes. I liked it but lot of hard work on that fountain 'cause (we) don't have an intercom to do (our) order. (I) have to yell out (my) orders. It was really rough. But we were young. We can take it.

WN: How much did you get paid?

RK: Chee, it wasn't too much but to me it was big. I can't remember. (Pause) I know it wasn't too much but to myself it was a lot of money. Even one dollar was a lot of money at the time.

WN: What did you do with the money that you made?

RK: Well, I bought things for myself. I didn't save. It was more spending, especially when you live at home. I was still single at the time . . .

WN: This was in '32, huh?

RK: Yeah, '31, '32. Around that time. Then I didn't work after that. I used to go swimming all the time. If (I had) free time, (I) just head for the beach.

WN: Did you have to give any of your money to your mother?

RK: Well, yes. (I) buy whatever (I) want for the house. So whatever she want, I go and buy and bring it home. It wasn't a must that (I had) to give her that allotment.

WN: Tell me how you met your husband.

RK: Well, I met my husband through his aunt. I met her after she rented the home that we had.

WN: Which home?

RK: Our home. We had two (at) lower Tenth Avenue. There was a back house. We had a big home in the front. After my father died, my mother thought she'd rent the front home. Then we moved in the back house 'cause it was just right for us.

That's how I met my husband's aunt. She was Mrs. Williams. We were friends. I started coming down this end [i.e., Kālia] to play volleyball 'cause the family always played volleyball. So that's how I got to know him later on.

WN: What is your husband's name?

RK: Major Kahale Kapule.

WN: Where did they live, the family?

RK: At the time, they were living where the Waikikian [Hotel] is now. They had a big home there.

WN: Next to the Harbottles?

RK: Next to the Harbottles.

WN: Tell me something about that family, what you remember about that family.

RK: The Harbottle family?

WN: No, the Kapules.

RK: Kapule family. Well. . . . In which way that you wanted me to. . . .

WN: Oh, for example, what did your husband's father do?

RK: Oh! My husband's father, William Kapule, was working at the McKesson & Robbins [Drug Co.]. His mother was a housewife. Mary Kapule. She was not too well a woman. They were just like my father and mother after I lost my mother. They were wonderful in-laws. I loved them very much. They treated me like a daughter. So I stayed with them, most of my time. Because I guess, my husband liked to be with (his) parents. So most of my young days was spent with my in-laws.

WN: What was their house like?

RK: Well, it was a big home. Was a very happy home. There's always something going on. My mother-in-law was a church woman. So we used to go to church with her. She was very good with grandchildren (and) with all the children that comes around the house.

WN: How many brothers and sisters did your husband have?

RK: Oh, just one sister and himself. There were only two children in the family. Then one adopted boy. The family always got together. There was always a group 'cause that was my husband's family. Within this vicinity [Kālia] there was lots of family in here on my husband's side. So every time they get together or there's something that's coming up, they're always happy people.

WN: So next to your in-laws house was the Harbottles?

RK: Uh huh [yes]. Which they were family, too.

WN: How about as you going up [toward] Kālia [Road, on Ala Moana] what other families do you remember?



RK: The Simersons and Kahanamokus. The Sterlings. The Paoas. Then around the corner going towards Diamond Head on Kālia Road would be a Japanese family which I forgot their name.

WN: Oh, was it Tsuji?

RK: Yeah, Tsuji, because I know Fred [Paoa, another interviewee] would know them.

WN: Would you say, as far as economic status of these families right along this part, you think it was average or higher than average? What would you say? Compared to other families living in other areas of Waikīkī?

RK: I think they were about above average. Because they (had) a different position at the time. Or are you talking about living condition?

WN: That too.

RK: That living condition? Oh, they were really more that high makamaka way of living. Everything is family. They have that prestige of being---because they were more like an elite. That type of family. But very friendly. It wasn't rowdy and all of that. They were more just above average, I would say that. Or maybe more.

WN: Did the Kapules do things with those families?

RK: Oh, yes. (They were all family.)

WN: What kinds of things?

RK: Weekends, we women folks used to go out (to) catch seaweeds and one of the women would be home cooking lunch. So we all come back with whatever we catch out there and sit under the hau tree or big tree and we start cleaning (the) seaweed. When lunch period comes along, we have our lunch. At the meantime, everybody's joking or revealing old stories. Then after we through, we call the family that lives (inland) to come and get their share of limu, seaweed.

We go to the beach, out fishing. The women folks get together. Or otherwise, we go out swimming. Go out little crabbing. But mostly we go out to pick limu (or) whatever they had on the beach. We'd go out every day and just roam the beach (to) see what we (can) catch. Then nighttime, we go out night poling. We catch little fishes. But mostly the fishermen that lived around here, they go out and fish.

If they have a little bit more, they (will) sell to the neighbors. But that's the way the family lived here. They work and whatever time they have, we get together.

WN: You mentioned the Seaside Gardens? Where was the Seaside Gardens? Next to your house?

RK: Yes. Right next to where I lived. Where Waikikian is now. That's where Seaside Garden (was).

WN: 'Cause I know there was a teahouse there called "Shioyu."

RK: That's before.

WN: What was before? First was the teahouse?

RK: What's the other name that you said the other . . .

WN: Mochizuki?

RK: Yeah. I think that was before I got down here. But I remember there was another owner. But all I remember was Seaside Gardens at the time. (Mochizuki) Tea House was there way before I ever came down here. 'Cause I came many times with my cousin to have Japanese food down here, before I got married. But I couldn't remember the name. [Mochizuki Tea House became Shioyu Tea House, which later became Seaside Gardens, all on the site of the present Waikikian Hotel. Dates are not certain.]

WN: What kind of a place was Seaside Gardens? Was it a restaurant?

RK: It was (a teahouse). Oh, gee, the front section you have to go up the stairs just like entering a big home. Then you get into the back end, [which] they converted (into) a dining room. Then they improved it later on. They made another section above. They had cottages further (back) that they used like dressing rooms.

WN: And next to Seaside Gardens, what was there? Going toward Ala Moana now?

RK: That's on the 'Ewa end?

WN: Yeah.

RK: On the 'Ewa side. It was the Beach [Clothes] Cleaners. There was a home in the back of that beach cleaner. (The Ciacci family lived there.) They had a walkway going (to) the back of it that you can go to the beach. Further on there were cottages on the beach going towards 'Ewa. There were four cottages.

Then another teahouse. I can't remember the name of the teahouse. Then they had homes. Then the big lot, where they tie up the boats on the beach(front). Then they had another teahouse [Ikesu Tea House] going towards the 'Ewa side.

WN: This is on the other side of Hobron Lane?

RK: On the beach.

WN: Yeah.

RK: That's going 'Ewa towards the Ala Moana bridge. They have another big teahouse there [Ikesu Tea House] and then the homes. There was the Jarrett home. Then, there were the Grimms and the Dykes.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay. How about turning upward [ma uka] on Hobron Lane? What do you remember?

RK: The upper part?

WN: Well, first you had that store on the corner.

RK: Oh, yes. That's the ma uka side of the beach, Hobron Lane. They had a little Chinese store there. Right (at) the corner of Hobron and Ala Moana which was Kam Look Store. They had (the Hamasaki family home and) shrubs in the back of the store, kiawe trees. All the way going towards Ala Moana bridge. Then along Ala Moana going towards Diamond Head, they had a few homes [on the ma uka side]. They had just one or two homes there. Then the kimono shop. [There were] about three or four cottages, going around the bend across of Waikikian [Hotel].

WN: There was a stream around there?

RK: And there was a stream [Pi'ināi'o Stream] and a little bridge there that went (along) the street. But then, I didn't know if there was a stream going along the Ala Moana Boulevard. But when I think of it, when I moved to that particular corner [near the present Waikikian Hotel], they had a wall. So to get out of the home and into the street, we'd have to get up like a step.

WN: Concrete wall?

RK: Uh huh [yes]. So it must have had a stream there. 'Cause it (had) a bridge and then the wall alongside of the street going towards 'Ewa.

WN: So even after the canal was built, the stream was still there?

RK: (Yes). It was still there but no water. It was just a dry stream. But the bridge was [still] there.

WN: Yeah. Fred Paoa [another interviewee] talks about that stream, Pi'ināi'o.

- RK: I don't know the name of the---'cause he lived here long. Born and raised here so he must know. I only came in 1934.
- WN: So you got married in '34 and then you lived first in your husband's family home next to the Harbottles, right? Which was next to where Waikikian Hotel is? From there, where did you move to?
- RK: Down next to the teahouse by Ala Wai Yacht Harbor. After the teahouse [closed], P.Y. Chong took over that teahouse.
- WN: When did you move there?
- RK: I think '35 with my in-laws.
- WN: What happened to the house, the house next to where the Waikikian is now?
- RK: Well, it was there but I had to go (with) my in-laws.
- WN: You know why they went?
- RK: It could be the difference of rent. Because they were renting.
- WN: So then a few years later, you moved to [another home] near the stream?
- RK: Yeah. Then I lived there until my mother-in-law died.
- WN: When did she die?
- RK: Chee, that was after the war 'cause we lived there--I could be wrong--maybe ('48 or '49). Could be around that time.
- WN: You told me last time about an amusement park [i.e., Aloha Park].
- RK: Oh, that's more or less on John 'Ena Road on the Diamond Head [RK means ma uka] side of the corner of 'Ena and Ala Moana Boulevard. It was a big amusement park there.
- WN: What's there now?
- RK: Well, after that it was Tops. Now they have a big restaurant there which is, I can't think of the name now.
- WN: It's still Tops.
- RK: The new Tops [Canterbury Coffee Shop and Pastry Shop].
- WN: At that time, did Ala Moana [Boulevard] continue past Kālia Road [to Kalākaua Avenue] like it does now?
- RK: No, Ala Moana Road [extension] wasn't there. You'd have to come [around] through 'Ena Road to go to Kalākaua. Later on in years

[1950s], they built that extension from 'Ena, Ala Moana out to Kalākaua.

WN: Tell me something about the amusement park.

RK: Well, it was a great big amusement park. They had a dance hall. They had circus. When the circus came to town, they have the ferris wheel, (etc.). They had all the different booths. They had the Big Dipper. To me was a big monster there. But I never did ride the Dipper because my parents wouldn't let (me) because it was kinda dangerous. But we'd ride the ferris wheel and the merry-go-round.

WN: Were those things up all year round?

RK: Yeah, they were there all the time. But sometimes, they had big events (and) sideshows.

WN: So it covered that whole block between John 'Ena and Kalākaua?

RK: Not exactly. Just part of that block. From the Ala Moana part to part of 'Ena Road going up towards the mountain side was part of the amusement [park]. Because they had homes above that (and the Dudoit family). Just around the corner, that was [Ray] Jerome Baker's home where his studio was on Kalākaua.

WN: What do you remember about the John 'Ena Road area? What kinds of families were living over there?

RK: Well, at the time I remember, they had stores on the 'Ewa side of John 'Ena Road. They had the amusement park there for a while on the Diamond Head side. Like I said, there were homes on John 'Ena going towards Kalākaua. And a few Japanese[-owned] stores, on the 'Ewa side. On the corner of Kalākaua and John 'Ena had a big Japanese[-owned] grocery store. They had a delicatessen (near) the corner (of 'Ena and Hobron). And where Kālia Hotel is now, they had cottages. They were owned by the Woolsey family. Then (going) towards the end of 'Ena into Ala Moana, [there was] the Kapi'olani Drive-Inn, where now is Wailana [Coffee House].

Then coming around on Hobron from John 'Ena, on the left-hand side going from 'Ena on Hobron, they had cottages. The mountain side, they had brushes, (some homes), and kiawe trees.

They had Japanese woman (folks) that (did) little washing. Japanese homes there. They had Hawaiian folks, (also). They had the Kalauokalani family [Rose Kaneapua, another interviewee] on the Diamond Head side. Then the Ling family's the opposite, on the 'Ewa side of Kalauokalani.

WN: Right where we are now about, yeah?

RK: Uh huh [yes]. Where we are now (on Līpe'epe'e Street and Hobron Lane).



Chings, Kaimis, Masons (on Hobron Lane). I might miss a few of them. [Then there] would be nothing but kiawe tree(s and brushes) all the way towards Ala Moana.

WN: Where Discovery Bay is now [corner of Ala Moana and Hobron].

RK: Where Discovery Bay is now. Up to Kalauokalani's home. But [there was] a home in the middle part of the kiawe trees (and brushes) where you cannot see from outside of the road. I don't know who lived there first. Later on, when the war [World War II] came, they convert that big area, where the kiawe trees (were), they housed the soldiers. They had a camp.

WN: Did they build houses just for the soldiers?

RK: I don't [know] because it was all blocked off. We didn't bother to go there because we was restricted to go. It was all fenced in with barbed wire (and) kiawe trees. They had quonset huts (and tents) in there. But we couldn't see from the outside.

WN: So that whole section where Discovery Bay is . . .

RK: (Yes). Where Kaio'o Drive is now. From Discovery Bay up to Kalauokalani's home. That whole unit was taken over by the military for a camp.

WN: The military, especially during the war---were there any problems between the military and the local folks?

RK: Not that I know of. They had martial law that time, yeah? The people go about their business. Had blackout. We had curfew time. We couldn't go out at (night). Our (windows) were all blinded--shaded off.

As far as I know, we really got along with the military folks. We had military too at the Ala Wai Yacht Harbor. They had a little division there. They had crash boats goes out for rescue.

WN: During the war, what other changes were there. For example, along the beach?

RK: Well, after the war, later on in years. . . .

WN: I mean during the war. Was there like barbed wire or anything like that?

RK: Oh, yes. They had barbed wire on the beach, certain section that you cannot go through. There's certain parts you can go to the beach. But more or less you cannot go where the barbed wire were laid out.

END OF INTERVIEW



Tape No. 13-34-2-85

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rebecca Kapule (RK)

March 27, 1985

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mrs. Rebecca Kapule on March 27, 1985 at her home in Waikīkī. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

After the war, well, actually from 1950, you started working at Moana Hotel.

RK: Yeah, I start working at the Moana Hotel in 1950 (under Mr. Guslander, manager). I was clerk-typist there. All (I) did was type all day long information on the name list of the guests that comes in. Type up cashier folios. That was our job then.

WN: How did you get the job?

RK: I got the job through one of the workers that was in the office there. I tried out for the job. There was another high school girl that tried out for the job too. But because she couldn't work at nights. . . . I said I could work day and nights whichever shift they would give me. So that's how I got the job.

WN: You work night shift?

RK: I worked night shift all the time. For many years. If they need a worker the next morning, I'll come back from that evening and take over in the morning shift.

WN: How old were your children at that time? When you started?

RK: Let's see. My children (were) about (fifteen, thirteen, twelve and ten years old).

WN: They [the oldest] were born around '35?

RK: Yeah.

WN: Some of them were about teenagers then.

RK: Yeah, they were young teenagers.

WN: Do you remember what your starting pay was?

RK: Hundred seventy-five [\$175] per month! It was kinda small but it was pretty big money at the time to me. I needed the job. I stayed four or five years for the Moana front desk. I mean, I work in the back office, but for the front desk as the typist. Then I was transferred out to reservation department. That's booking. I stayed with reservations until I retired.

WN: What department did you start with? What office was this? Was there a name for the office that you worked for?

RK: Well, reservation department. They combined it together--sales and reservations. We book FITs [Free Independent Traveler]. That means individual guests that come in.

WN: What does FIT stand for?

RK: Oh, gee, I used to know. It's individual people that wants a room for the night or for two or three days or week. Sales [department] comes under "groups." They book groups. We have phone calls from Mainland sometimes. We have correspondence that comes in that's asking for rooms. Then we check our chart--our monthly chart, or yearly chart. We see wherever the opening rooms. We type up a confirmation and send it back to them that we have confirmed a reservation for them under certain time of the year, month, date.

WN: So in 1950, I would imagine there weren't that many hotels in Waikīkī?

RK: No, not too many. Moana, Royal Hawaiian, Halekulani was there. Niumalu. Island Holiday. Later on, they built the Surfrider. They had the old Surfrider. Then they built (Princess Ka'iulani Hotel).

WN: What was Moana Hotel like when you first started? For example, was it considered the ritziest and classiest hotel?

RK: (Yes.) Moana was but I think Royal Hawaiian was more the ritzy one. It was run by Matson Navigation Company at the time when I worked at the Moana. Both hotels were run by Matson. Then it was sold in. . . .

WN: About '56?

RK: Yeah, around that, to Sheraton. [In 1958, Matson sold four hotels--Royal Hawaiian, Moana, Surfrider, and Princess Ka'iulani--to Sheraton Corporation.]

WN: Did you notice any changes in management or working conditions?

RK: Oh, yes. Working condition--whenever we have new management in, they always have different ideas.

WN: Do you remember any big changes between being under Matson and being under Sheraton?

RK: Not too much. Well, I liked working for Matson because we weren't in the union then. Accounting and clerical weren't in the union. All the other departments were. We joined the union in 1959 after Sheraton took over the hotel. There were some changes but not too much differences.

WN: What were some of the changes that you experienced after you joined the union? Before and after.

RK: Well, before when the hotel was busy, we'll stay and work. Pick up all our work or help somebody else to pick up their work. It was just like a family, everybody help one another. And then, we changed to Sheraton. Sheraton was all right. We were on the staff yet. It was running pretty good. But everything has some changes. Lot of little changes in departments.

The accounting felt like they should get into the union. They talked us into getting into the union for the clerical and accounting department. We had taken a vote, and majority rules. So we joined the union. After the union, it turned out okay. I liked it in a way because I was the oldest one as a clerk-typist. So (I) had seniority. With the union, we had all different kinds of benefits as they negotiate.

We had lot of duties to do. We have to run the telex machine-- messages to go out each day and receiving messages. We have ledgers to work on for the hotel to see how much each day we take in, in confirmations. Then we make weekly and monthly statistics. That's (from) our ledger books. We used to rotate about four or five clerks.

WN: How many clerks were there altogether?

RK: There were more than four clerks. I mean, [including sales]. I think about eight of us. But then each one had little different thing to do. We had four ledgers that we have to post for the hotel [for] each arrival. I stayed on the ledgers until I retired. I [also] did the file work [and] some of the correspondence.

WN: After you joined the union, was there a difference in the family-type atmosphere at work?

RK: Well, no. Each person had their duties to do. That's their job description, what they are supposed to do. There's lot of work.

From the latter part of the '50s to the '60s, there was the time in that span of generation then where everybody got together and work together, either laugh or do things together. Until later on in years, way after. . . . There is always a turnover. [When] the newer generation came in, it was pretty rough.

WN: Rough in terms of what?

RK: They don't want to listen!

(Laughter)

RK: I hate to say this about this generation. They don't work together. There's no family working togetherness. It's a different type of clientele and working procedure.

WN: Well, lot of people say the younger generation is not as . . .

RK: I give them credit 'cause they have their education. We had college students that came in for hotel training. They come from the Mainland, summertime. We have to show them what we were doing in the back office. They go to different departments. They ask us questions what to do, we show them. They [eventually] get into it. Then they go back college again [and] come back as assistant managers.

You know, Chris Hemmeter? He was in my office. I trained him to do office work (chuckles). I scolded him [once] for putting his feet on the typewriter, and he's a big shot today. (Laughs) He was a nice boy. He was always thinking. He always had a pencil, flipping his pencil and his mind is just way far away.

And I would say, "Chris! You have to do that, you know."

"Oh, okay."

He had his two big feet on my typewriter like this. [RK demonstrates.] I just sail into him. "Chris! Take that foot off of my typewriter! I don't want you putting your foot in my typewriter!" (Laughs) He was shaking the pen. I always think about that boy there.

Oh, yeah. We have lot of different people come in for hotel training. The young generation, well, they work. But then they work just to a certain (time). They drop everything and they (will) go home.

WN: That's how it is today, you know.

RK: Yeah, where we never did. If we had a pile of work, we do it. Even if it's over our time. But then the hotel would reimburse us by hours on slow periods.

WN: After the union came in, did the union try to discourage this kind of thing?

RK: (Yes). It's within the contract that you worked your hours. If you do work over then you get overtime pay or overtime hours off. But [under] the union, you have different benefits; [such as] the increase of pay [and] vacation time, either holiday time or double time.

WN: Were there any kind of social activities before the union that the hotel put on for its employees?

RK: Oh, yes. We have our Christmas gathering. Every year, the hotel give us. We get together, all departments.

WN: Was it just the [Moana] hotel or was it the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] employees too?

RK: The Moana [Hotel] and the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] were under the same management]. We have Christmas functions. We go to the Royal. Sometimes it's dinner, dance, shows--what they give to all the employees. Then we have picnics. It (was) a Labor Day picnic, I think, at He'eia Kea. Matson had a place out there.

WN: Did Sheraton put on the same kind of thing?

RK: Yes, they did. They carried on through the same kind of deal.

WN: Did the parties continue after the union come in?

RK: You mean the get-together parties? Yeah, but the biggest they ever give is the Christmas party. The hotel gives that for all employees, even to retirees, too.

WN: Was there any year, or you know when the tourists really started to--- or when the occupancy of the hotel started to increase?

RK: Chee, that's way back. It's always been from Matson time. When the [Matson] ships come in at the time in 1950, way before that, when all the different ships like the Lurline, the Matsonia, or the Monterey come in, we're busy.

The busy period would be about, (pause) really got busy I think about the (late '50s, early) '60s, they start coming. But there always have been tourists that come in. We have peak season. From January until around March. Then we'll slow down in May. Pick up in June, July, August (and December). September, October, November, it's a slow period. Then end of November into January and to March again, that's a busy period.

WN: I know '59 was when the first jet came to Hawai'i.

RK: I think so, around there. People start coming faster. Yeah, if you say about '59, would be about that. I wasn't too sure.

WN: So Matson in owning the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian, in owning also the ships that brought the tourists over, did the tourists then just get off the boat and they were already signed up to stay at the Moana then?

RK: Yeah. They were signed up. We were working on the confirmation. . . . Booking the guests that came in or whoever books them from the



- Mainland. We take calls. That's where we get more or less our booking. (People) send us correspondence, (too).
- WN: So actually, they went from Matson to Matson. It was like a monopoly, you know of the . . .
- RK: Yeah. Because it was Matson that ran the two hotels.
- WN: After Sheraton took over [in 1958], was there still that link between Matson and Moana Hotel? Matson ships?
- RK: For a while until Matson really left. Then Sheraton took over completely with the same contract that Matson had for all employees.
- WN: Matson was a more or less local company? [Castle & Cooke was agent and substantial owner of Matson Navigation Company.]
- RK: (Yes), it was a shipping (and hotel) company--Mainland and local here. They had this office down here. Then later on, all different hotels came up.
- WN: Your co-workers, mainly what nationality were they?
- RK: You mean from Matson time?
- WN: Yeah, and how did they change over the years?
- RK: Well, at the time, when Matson ran the hotel, they were Haoles, Portuguese, Hawaiian, half-Whites.
- WN: Chinese? Japanese? Anybody?
- RK: They had Chinese, Japanese, (and others). As far as I remembered, the accounting [department], yes, they did. But I'm thinking of my department (at) the front desk, they didn't. With the other departments, they had Orientals.
- WN: What are some other departments?
- RK: Ah, maintenance, housekeeping, food and beverage, waiters, waitress, bartenders, cooks, and whatever the other departments, they have.
- WN: And about the time you retired, what was it mostly?
- RK: Well, they had the mixture of different races. All different races. They have a lot of Filipinos in housekeeping now. They have a lot of Orientals in the office work. Accounting, they always had Japanese there (from) way back.
- WN: So you retired in '76?
- RK: Yeah, I retired in '76. That's the end of my working years. (Chuckles)



WN: How did you feel about retiring?

RK: Well, I was kinda confused. I didn't know what I was gonna do. I missed my work. It's just that pace every day. You going in and out. In and out. But then I got used to it.

WN: You had to retire?

RK: No. I just took my retirement 'cause I thought I would take up part-time work instead. 'Cause reservations department was pretty rough. I was the oldest one there.

WN: How much older were you?

RK: I think I was fifteen years older than them. I seen them come and go.

WN: How did they treat you?

RK: Like an aunty!

(Laughter)

RK: They all call me "Aunty Ree." Oh, gosh, I can't think of anything more to say. But it was interesting. I liked the hotel work. Rough, but I like it. You meet people. I like that night shift beside the day shift, too. It's a big change.

WN: From what time to what time did you work?

RK: Oh, from seven in the morning to three o'clock, and three to eleven [p.m.]. Whatever shift (I) take over.

WN: You remember any particular incident that happened while you were working with a customer or anything?

RK: Well, I didn't get too much in contact with the customers 'cause I was just doing the typing for the desk clerk. They did the registration. I did the typing for them and filing name spindles for them to look (at), whenever people ask for any guests in the house. And the same thing I do for the telephone operators, too. I have copies for the telephone operators on this spindle.

One time, I remember I had to work from seven o'clock [a.m.] to eleven o'clock that night. 'Cause the other girl was sick. She couldn't come in. And it was on a ship day too. That's the worst day to take off.

WN: How often did ship day come?

RK: Twice a week, I think. That's the only time I remember that I have to stay from the morning. Our manager asked me if I would stay 'cause the girl couldn't come in. This thing have to be all typed

up, you know. By the time I got through at eleven o'clock, I was just down to poop!

Funny, how in school I just hated typing. I used to punch that typewriter. But it didn't bother me when I was working. Can stay all day and just type all day long. Sometimes, the clerk would say, "Chee, Ree, aren't you tired of that typewriter?"

"Never. I just keep on going!"

WN: How has hotel work changed, do you think? I mean are there big differences from when you started to now?

RK: Well, now they have more machines. They were going to put in computer but too much money, I think. The Royal Hawaiian [Hotel] had I think the IBM machine for reservation department. There's more improvement. (They) have to go (to) class for that. But they didn't put that in Moana. They put Reservatron in there. We send message in and out beside the telex machine or by letter form.

WN: What's Reservatron?

RK: That's a machine that you send out message, receive and send.

WN: To where?

RK: Mainland. You can talk back to them on the machine.

WN: So they had that when you were working there?

RK: Yeah, when I worked there. They called it the Reservatron. It's like a typewriter that sends out messages and receives messages. Whatever state you gonna send it to.

WN: When you first started, from what state were most of the tourists from?

RK: Oh, they were from all over. We can't tell. They from all different places.

WN: But not like mostly California or anything like that?

RK: I couldn't say. Oh, they come from all over. From some little country place, they'll come in. I guess everything's gotten broader minded after the war. Everything's little bit open more. People travel more by airplanes. They travel a lot. Come from (Mainland), Mexico, Japan. (We) have lots of tourists from Japan.

WN: How did you deal with the---oh, you didn't work with them so you didn't have to deal with the language?

RK: No, no, I don't have to. But sometimes, we get to talk to them, if we up front if they ask any questions. We either have to do hand motions or try to get somebody that would know how. But more

or less hand motion they would know. In the beginning, was pretty hard 'cause they didn't know much English.

WN: When you retired, where were you living?

RK: Right here.

WN: On Hobron Lane?

RK: On Hobron Lane, where the new hotel is now.

WN: Discovery Bay?

RK: No. Right here. Waikiki Hobron [Hotel]. This one right here, in the middle of the block here.

WN: You were renting?

RK: Yeah. I was renting. And I retired here.

WN: Then when did you move to this location [Līpe'epe'e Street]?

RK: Ah, that's in '78. I moved here.

WN: After you retired?

RK: Uh huh [yes].

WN: Why did you move here?

RK: Well, they had to tear down the apartment to build the [Waikiki Hobron] Hotel.

WN: And this was here already? These apartments?

RK: Yeah, these apartments were here. They were here quite some time.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Tell me about this apartment complex? Who owned it?

RK: Oh, this unit where I live, this apartment house is owned by the Lings. It's the Ling Brothers, Limited. So they've been here quite some time before I ever moved in this section.

WN: When was this apartment building built?

RK: I couldn't tell you. That was way back. I really don't know if it was in the '40s or '50s.

WN: You know, you've lived in different areas in Waikīkī. You lived in a lot of houses and everything, what are your feelings towards Waikīkī? It's changed quite a bit, I can imagine. How do you feel about the changes?

RK: Oh, the changes have gone from a little dirt road, two-car road way back from the '30s. How would I express myself now? They had homes along the beach road [i.e. Ala Moana Blvd.] and teahouses, cleaning shops, stores up the street, a little store at Hobron Lane.

Then middle part of '50s, I think they start building the road, Ala Moana Highway [Boulevard]. They had more improvement. Then [Kaiser] Hawaiian Village came up in [1955]. Then later on [in 1963] 'Ilikai [Hotel] got up. Then the Kālia Hotel on 'Ena Road was built around that time.

WN: How do you feel about living here today?

RK: I like it here because it's convenient for me. I love the place. I've been here for so long. It's easy for me to go shopping. And transportation's the bus. So either way you go, it's convenient. 'Cause (I) can walk either way. (I) can walk to the Ala Moana Center. So that's the reason why I live here. I like it here although it's got more hotels and condominiums that came up and more modern stores. So it's kinda cramped in now.

WN: Would you kinda wish it was like how it was before?

RK: Well, in a way. But then, I can't say. 'Cause more people moving in. Everything is going ahead. But for myself, it's kinda scary to go out at night, where it used to be I don't have any problems being afraid to go out at night alone. When I used to work, I used to walk from up the bus stop to where I lived on lower part of Ala Moana and it's dark and I wasn't afraid. Now, I'm afraid to get out [at night]. Even to open your door. So things have changed quite a bit.

WN: Before I turn the tape off, you have any last things you want to say?

RK: No. There's nothing else that I can think of.

WN: Okay, thank you very much.

RK: Okay. (You're welcome.)

END OF INTERVIEW

# **WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES**

## **Volume I**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i-Mānoa**

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